



PROTECTED B

For action

PROPOSED ENHANCED BORDER MEASURES – COVID-19

For the Minister

ISSUE

The purpose of this note is to seek your approval to implement Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC)-requested border measures for travellers from Iran and to implement enhanced screening of travellers arriving in Canada by land, rail, or ferry.

BACKGROUND

PHAC has requested that the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) expand its enhanced border measures currently in place for travellers from Hubei, China, to travellers who have been in Iran within the 14 days preceding their entry to Canada.

Between January 1, 2020, and February 28, 2020, 10,349 travellers arrived in Canada who initially started their journey in Iran. Of these travellers, 58% arrived in Toronto, 29% in Montréal, 11% in Vancouver, and 2% at other international airports; 46% were foreign nationals, 34% were Canadian citizens, 19% were permanent residents, and 1% of traveller document types were not captured. Of note, 62% were travelling on an Iranian travel document, 34% were travelling on a Canadian passport, and the remaining 4% held travel documents from various other countries.

CONSIDERATIONS

Enhanced screening for travellers from Iran (air mode)

PHAC has requested expanded border measures for travellers from Iran. This expansion is slated to occur no later than March 4, 2020. The process for travellers from Iran will be identical to those who arrive from Hubei:

- travellers will be asked "Have you been in the Province of Hubei (China) or in Iran in the past 14 days?" on an electronic kiosk or by a border services officer directly;
- travellers who respond "yes" will be referred for further screening;
- travellers experiencing flu-like symptoms will be referred to a PHAC quarantine officer for further examination;

PROTECTED B

- all others will be required to fill out a PHAC COVID-19 form to support contact tracing, and will be provided with an information handout that contains instructions to travellers to monitor themselves for symptoms, advice to self-isolate at home for 14 days, and to contact the public health authority of their jurisdiction if they develop symptoms in the next 14 days; and
- asymptomatic travellers will be provided a mask kit for use if they begin feeling ill.

While targeted messaging and follow-up will be used for travellers from Hubei province and Iran at this time, all travellers will be provided access to COVID-19 information, including instructions to monitor for symptoms. This information distribution will be done via PHAC.

Enhanced border measures for travellers seeking entry by land, rail, and ferry

PHAC has also requested that the CBSA expand COVID-19 screening measures to travellers seeking entry into Canada by land, rail, or ferry. The CBSA is expecting to be in the position to enhance primary questioning at land borders as early as March 3, 2020, and no later than March 6, 2020. This expansion is due to the increased number of cases being confirmed in various locations throughout the United States.

CBSA officers working at the Primary Inspection Line (PIL) will ask travellers if they have or may have been in contact with someone who has or may have had exposure to COVID-19. Some discretion will be exercised by CBSA officers when it comes to asking the screening question for regular cross-border travellers (i.e. those who cross more or less daily).

If the traveller responds "yes," they will be asked if they are feeling ill or unwell. Should the traveller be feeling ill or unwell, they will be referred for further examination. Upon arrival at secondary, they will be provided a mask, isolated, and asked questions related to their symptoms. If they have symptoms that are consistent with COVID-19, a PHAC quarantine officer will be contacted by phone to determine next steps. Should a traveller be seriously ill and in need of immediate medical attention, they will be referred to the appropriate local or emergency health authority for medical assessment without delay.

Travellers who have responded "yes" that they have been in prolonged contact with someone who had exposure to or has had COVID-19 and who does not feel ill or unwell will be provided an information handout and asked to self-monitor for symptoms and to contact the local public health authority of their jurisdiction if they develop symptoms in the next 14 days.


COVID-19 information handouts would also be made available and distributed at the PIL; made available inside CBSA offices; and provided to Duty Free store operators. Scripts for existing overhead electronic signage and interior video screens would also be considered for display, as is currently done in airports.

PROTECTED B

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the CBSA implement the expanded border measures for travellers from Iran and screening for travellers arriving by land, rail, and ferry as requested by PHAC.

Please note that I am available to discuss, or have CBSA officials brief your staff, at your convenience.

 03 MARS 2020

John Ossowski
President

Minister's response

I approve ☐

I do not approve ☐

The Honourable Bill Blair, P.C., C.O.M., M.P.

Date

c.c.: Mr. Rob Stewart, Deputy Minister
Public Safety Canada